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Evaluation of the Office of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The Department of Political Affairs is the lead United Nations department responsible for maintaining peace and security by assisting Member States and other international, regional and subregional organizations to prevent and resolve potentially violent disputes and conflict. The Department was last evaluated by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) from 2006 to 2008. Since then, the Department has evolved from a largely desk-based department into a more field-focused operation, reorienting its activities to support field-based conflict prevention and resolution work.

Conflict prevention and resolution work is undertaken mainly through special political missions, which have increased in number since 2008, as well as through United Nations country teams in non-mission settings. From Headquarters, the Department supports these entities through liaison with Member States, United Nations entities and others to broadly foster an enabling environment for the field entities to succeed. At the field level, the Department's support ranges from general assistance (e.g., policy guidance and administrative assistance) to specialized expertise (e.g., electoral assistance and mediation), aimed at strengthening the capacity of the field entities to achieve their conflict prevention and resolution mandates.

The present evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the substantive support of the Department of Political Affairs to field-based conflict prevention and resolution work from 2008 to 2015. It relied on a wide a range of qualitative and quantitative sources to support its analysis.

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During the evaluation period, the Department of Political Affairs supported almost all of the highest-criticality conflict settings. The establishment of the Department's regional offices, along with the deployment of peace and development advisers to non-mission settings, has helped broaden its global reach. Beyond the highest-criticality settings, however, the Department's presence is less far-reaching. Although resource constraints have limited its capacity to meet all needs, its strategic planning documents do not demonstrate clear, data-driven thinking on how the Department will focus its limited resources on other settings that need assistance. Department staff, the field-based entities they support and OIOS direct observations underline that the Department's shift away from desk-based analysis has left a gap, namely, early-warning analysis, that could help the Department better foresee and act on potential threats to peace.

These gaps notwithstanding, there is evidence that the Department's support has been effective and that it has contributed positively to success in the field. Staff from entities in numerous field settings point to such examples. At the same time, they note areas of lesser effectiveness, namely, the Department's inability to address system-wide administrative challenges, coordination and intervention with other actors on behalf of the field and long-term strategic guidance for the field. Its attention to gender and human rights has progressed, but both Headquarters and field leadership remain gender-imbalanced, and neither gender nor human rights is a universal field priority.

While the Department has responded to the support needs of a growing number of field operations, its human and financial resources have not kept pace with demand. Wider United Nations administrative procedures have also limited its efficiency. In addition, the Department is weakly positioned to monitor overall mission accountability for results, the adherence of missions to United Nations principles and their eventual exit. A lack of attention to harnessing knowledge with respect to performance has further prevented the Department from enhancing accountability and from learning from its successes and shortcomings.

OIOS makes four important recommendations, all of which the Department of Political Affairs has accepted, namely, that it will:

- Institutionalize its role in strengthening field-level accountability, in consultation with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General
- Fill key analytical gaps, i.e., in overall contextual analysis for early warning and early action and in evaluation
- Strengthen Headquarters and field-level planning processes
- Undertake measures to adequately resource core functional gaps.

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I. Introduction and objective

1. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) identified the Department for Political Affairs for evaluation on the basis of a risk assessment that the Inspection and Evaluation Division undertook to identify Secretariat programme evaluation priorities. The Committee for Programme and Coordination selected the programme evaluation of the Department for consideration at its fifty-seventh session to be held in June 2017.[1] The General Assembly endorsed the selection in its resolution 70/8.

2. The general frame of reference for OIOS is set out in General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B, 54/244 and 59/272, as well as in the Secretary-General's bulletin on the establishment of the Office (ST/SGB/273), which authorizes OIOS to initiate, carry out and report on any action that it considers necessary to fulfil its responsibilities. OIOS evaluation is provided for in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.[2]

3. The overall evaluation objective was to determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Department's substantive support for field-based conflict prevention and resolution work from 2008 to 2015. The evaluation topic emerged from a programme-level risk assessment described in the evaluation inception paper produced at the outset of the evaluation.[3] The evaluation was conducted in conformity with norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations system.[4]

4. Comments from management of the Department of Political Affairs were sought on the draft report and taken into account in the final report. The Department's response is included in the annex.

II. Background

History and mandate of the Department of Political Affairs

5. The Department of Political Affairs is the lead United Nations department responsible for maintaining peace and security by assisting Member States and other international, regional and subregional organizations in preventing and resolving potentially violent disputes and conflict. Established in 1992, the Department receives its programme direction through General Assembly resolutions and Security Council mandates.

6. The role of the Department spans the following areas:[5]

(a) Monitoring and assessing global political developments, with the aim of detecting potential crises before they escalate;

[1] See A/70/16.
[2] See ST/SGB/2016/6, Regulation 7.1.
[3] IED-15-006.
[4] See UNEG/FN/Standards (2005).
[5] See A/67/6.

(b) Leading operational responses to crises, including deployment of mediation experts and provision of political and policy guidance and strategic direction to special political missions;

(c) Providing strategic advice to the Secretary-General and his envoys on conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding issues;

(d) Providing election-related assistance at the request of Member States and coordinating system-wide responses on electoral matters;

(e) Providing substantive support and secretariat services to the Security Council, the General Assembly and their subsidiary bodies and other intergovernmental bodies.

7. The Inspection and Evaluation Division last evaluated the Department from 2006 to 2008. Since then, the Department has evolved from a largely desk-based, Headquarters-focused organization into a more field-focused operation.

Field-based conflict prevention and resolution work

8. While the number and intensity of armed conflicts began declining in the 1990s, this trend has reversed in recent years. Civil wars, as well as attacks by Governments and armed groups against civilians, have risen for the first time in a decade, and many of today's armed conflicts are more intractable and less conducive to political resolution.[6] Efforts to address these conflicts have focused on two types of field missions: peacekeeping operations and special political missions. According to the budget for the biennium 2014-2015, there were 16 peacekeeping operations and 34 special political missions.[7]

9. Special political missions are broadly defined as United Nations civilian missions deployed for a limited period to support Member States through good offices, conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding.[8] Special political missions are established by the General Assembly or the Security Council, or at the personal initiative of the Secretary-General to help prevent and resolve conflict or to build lasting peace in nations emerging from civil wars.[9] Special political missions are a primary tool for the United Nations to engage in conflict prevention and resolution, providing a platform for political analysis and diplomacy.

10. The Department categorizes its special political missions in three thematic clusters:

- Cluster I: special/personal envoys and special advisers of the Secretary-General
- Cluster II: sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels
- Cluster III: political offices, peacebuilding support offices and integrated offices

[6] *Human Security Report 2013*, available from http://hsrgroup.org/human-security-reports/2013/overview.aspx.
[7] A/69/363/Add.8.
[8] Ibid.
[9] See A/69/363 and ST/SGB/2009/13.

11. As figure I shows, the total number of special political missions led by the Department of Political Affairs increased from 21 in the biennium 2008-2009 to 34 in 2014-2015, with most of this growth occurring in clusters I and II.

Figure I
Number of special political missions led by the Department from 2008 to 2015, by cluster

	2008-2009	*2010-2011*	*2012-2013*	*2014-2015*
Cluster I: special/personal envoys and special advisers of the Secretary-General	6	5	6	11[a]
Cluster II: sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels	6	8	9[b]	12[c]
Cluster III: political offices, peacebuilding support offices and integrated offices	9	12	12	11
Total	**21**	**25**	**27**	**34**

Source: A/64/349, A/66/354, A/68/327, A/69/363, A/65/328/Add.7 and A/69/363/Add.8.

[a] Lead of one mission is shared with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

[b] See A/65/328/Add.7.

[c] See A/69/363/Add.8.

12. The present evaluation focused primarily on clusters I and III, as these constitute the main field-based conduits of conflict prevention and resolution work; cluster II entities are ad hoc panels of external experts who undertake specific information-gathering missions on behalf of the Security Council with support from the Department.[10] Furthermore, in addition to these three clusters, the Department of provides support to a fourth, more diverse, category of countries in non-special political mission settings (e.g., peacekeeping operations, country teams and others) through the presence of peace and development advisers (see paras. 19-24 and 31-35 below).

13. Figure II summarizes the wide range of support that the Department provides. Inferred during the data collection by the Inspection and Evaluation Division, it represents a contribution to the understanding of the Department's support by classifying the Department's work into categories that were less widely known before the evaluation. The Department's support, which spans all of the broad programmatic areas highlighted in paragraph 6, is aimed at facilitating the outcomes assessed in this evaluation. These outcomes are at two levels. At the field level, the Department seeks to build or complement the capacity of field-level stakeholders, whether at an overarching political level or in specific technical areas, to achieve the various aspects of their mandates. At the Headquarters level, the Department aims to create a broad enabling environment to help facilitate the work of the field, e.g., through liaison with Member States, other entities throughout the United Nations system and others, to serve as a conduit for information, advocacy, support and coordination.[11] The Department of Political Affairs is comprised of six regional

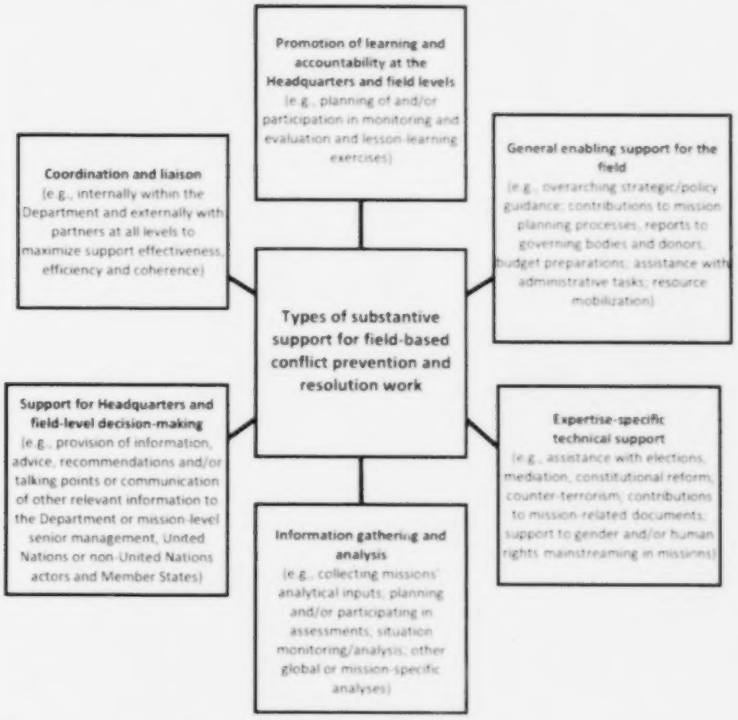
[10] The Inspection and Evaluation Division included cluster II entities, but with less emphasis.

[11] The Inspection and Evaluation Division articulated these outcome levels in a programme impact pathway included in its inception paper.

divisions (Africa I, Africa II, Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Middle East and West Asia), which, in addition to supporting the cluster I and III countries (as well as non-mission countries), liaise with the other Department divisions which provide support, e.g., the Electoral Assistance Division, the Policy and Mediation Division and the Office of the Under-Secretary-General. Support to cluster II is provided largely by the Security Council Affairs Division.

Figure II

Types of substantive support provided by the Department of Political Affairs to field-based conflict prevention and resolution work, 2008-2015


Promotion of learning and accountability at the Headquarters and field levels
(e.g., planning of and/or participation in monitoring and evaluation and lesson-learning exercises)
Coordination and liaison
(e.g., internally within the Department and externally with partners at all levels to maximize support effectiveness, efficiency and coherence)
General enabling support for the field
(e.g., overarching strategic/policy guidance; contributions to mission planning processes; reports to governing bodies and donors; budget preparations; assistance with administrative tasks; resource mobilization)
Types of substantive support for field-based conflict prevention and resolution work
Support for Headquarters and field-level decision-making
(e.g., provision of information, advice, recommendations and/or talking points or communication of other relevant information to the Department or mission-level senior management, United Nations or non-United Nations actors and Member States)
Expertise-specific technical support
(e.g., assistance with elections, mediation, constitutional reform, counter-terrorism; contributions to mission-related documents; support to gender and/or human rights mainstreaming in missions)
Information gathering and analysis
(e.g., collecting missions' analytical inputs; planning and/or participating in assessments; situation monitoring/analysis; other global or mission-specific analyses)

Source: The Inspection and Evaluation Division interviews and surveys.

Financial resources

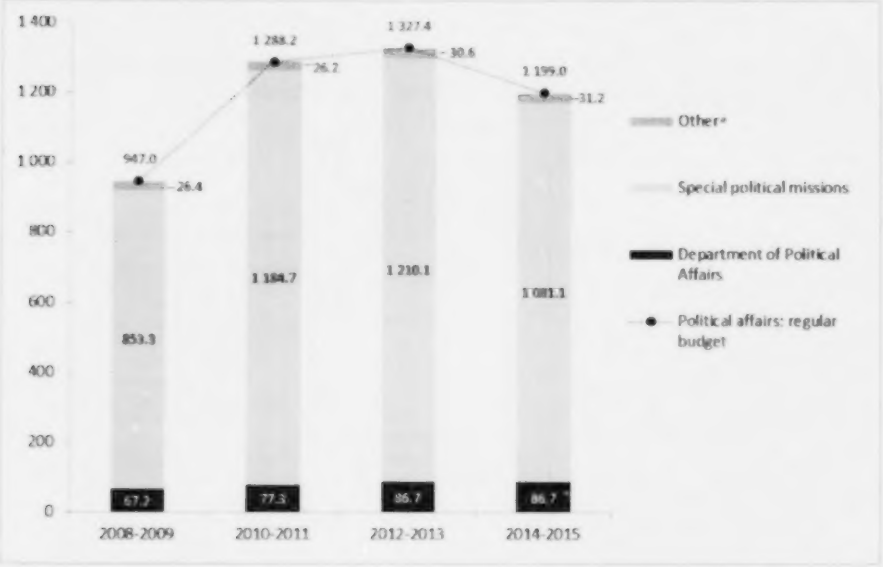
14. The Department of Political Affairs and the special political missions it supports are found under the political affairs budget (part II, sect. 3) of the United Nations regular budget. The 2015 political affairs budget constituted roughly 20.0 per cent of the total regular budget financial resources of the United Nations.[12]

15. As figure III indicates, special political missions budgets consistently account for the vast majority of regular budget resources for political affairs. The numeric

[12] See A/68/6 (Sect. 3).

growth of special political missions is accompanied by even greater budgetary increases.

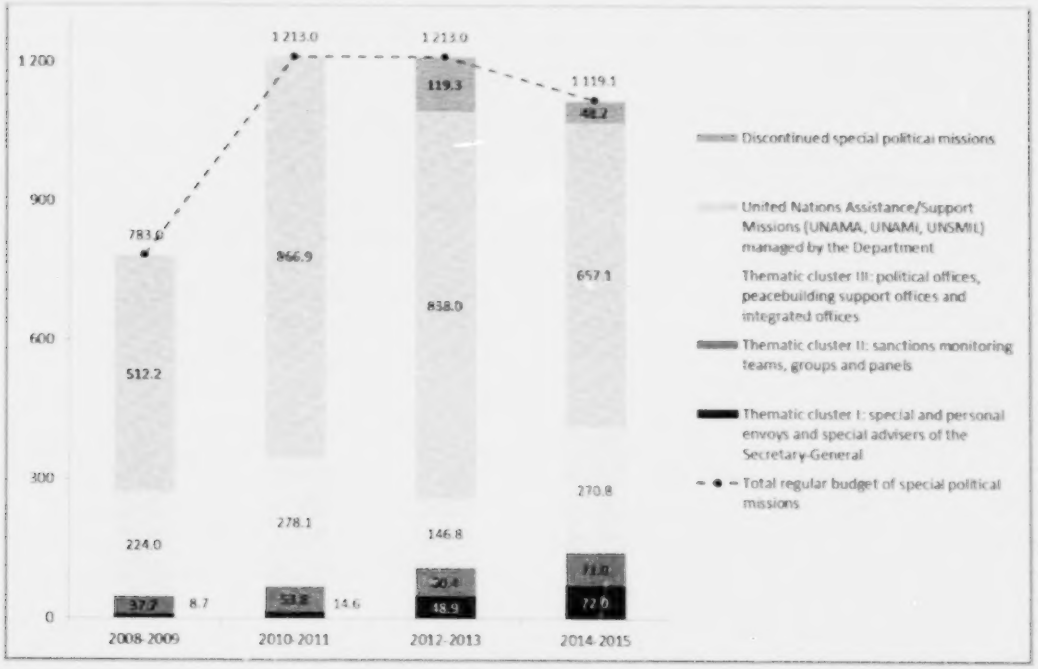
Figure III
Regular budget financial resources, political affairs, 2008-2015
(Millions of United States dollars)



Source: Compilation of data from A/68/6 (Sect. 3), A/66/6 (Sect. 3) and A/64/6 (Sect. 3).
* "*Other*" category contains Register of Damage, Peacebuilding Support Office and Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

16. Figure IV indicates how these resources are apportioned among the clusters over this same period. Three large cluster III missions (the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)) received the largest proportion of the overall special political mission budget.

Figure IV
Special political mission regular budget resources, by cluster, 2008-2015
(Millions of United States dollars)



Source: Compilation of data from A/69/363, A/68/327, A/67/346, A/66/354, A/65/328, A/64/349 and A/63/346.
Note: The slight discrepancies between special political mission resources cited in figures III and IV are due to the different data sources used.
[a] 2015 requirements for UNSMIL/UNAMA reflect six months of interim funding, pending preparation of 12-month budgets. See A/68/327 and A/66/354.
[b] Slight decrease in special political mission budgets in 2014-2015 is due to the fact that UNAMA and UNSMIL presented only partial budgets for 2015.

III. Methodology

17. The evaluation relied on a mixed-method approach, which featured the triangulation of the following data sources:

(a) **Case study missions, involving interviews, focus groups, direct observations and desk reviews**: nine direct observations and five cross-mission desk reviews, as well as 110 interviews and focus groups with mission staff, United Nations country teams members, Governments and other stakeholders, in the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel (OSES), UNAMA, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and UNSMIL;[13]

[13] The Inspection and Evaluation Division selected case studies on the basis of mission size and duration, cluster representation and geographical spread.

(b) **Desk-based case studies**: the same desk reviews indicated above, with UNAMI, the Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen and the Office of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for Myanmar;

(c) **Headquarters-level interviews and focus group discussions**: 46 interviews with Department staff, 13 United Nations partners and external think tanks;

(d) **Surveys**: web-based surveys of a non-random sample of 59 Professional-level Headquarters staff of the Department,[14] 85 case study mission staff,[15] 14 peace and development advisers[16] and 25 cluster II experts;[17]

(e) **Structured document reviews**: analyses of selected samples (or universes) of 29 planning and reporting documents; 51 evaluations, after-action reviews and other learning reports; 9 audit reports; 4 strategic assessment mission and technical assessment mission reports; 8 end-of-assignment reports by Special Representatives of the Secretary-General; and 23 Special Representatives of the Secretary-General compacts; as well as a review of the Department and mission programme documents.

18. The evaluation encountered three main methodological limitations: the inherent difficulty of measuring conflict prevention and resolution, the scarcity of results data generated by the Department and the low rate of response to the Department staff survey. The Inspection and Evaluation Division addressed the first two limitations by chronologically tracing the Department's support and field-level results, while taking into account external constraints, through desk review as well as perceptual evidence. It addressed the third limitation by undertaking non-respondent analysis, which revealed that the demographic profile of survey respondents closely mirrored that of Department staff more generally, thus indicating an acceptable level of representativeness to support the use of the survey in the evaluation.

IV. Evaluation results

A. There is evidence that the Department's substantive support to date has been effective, and despite significant external constraints this support is reported as contributing to field success in noteworthy ways

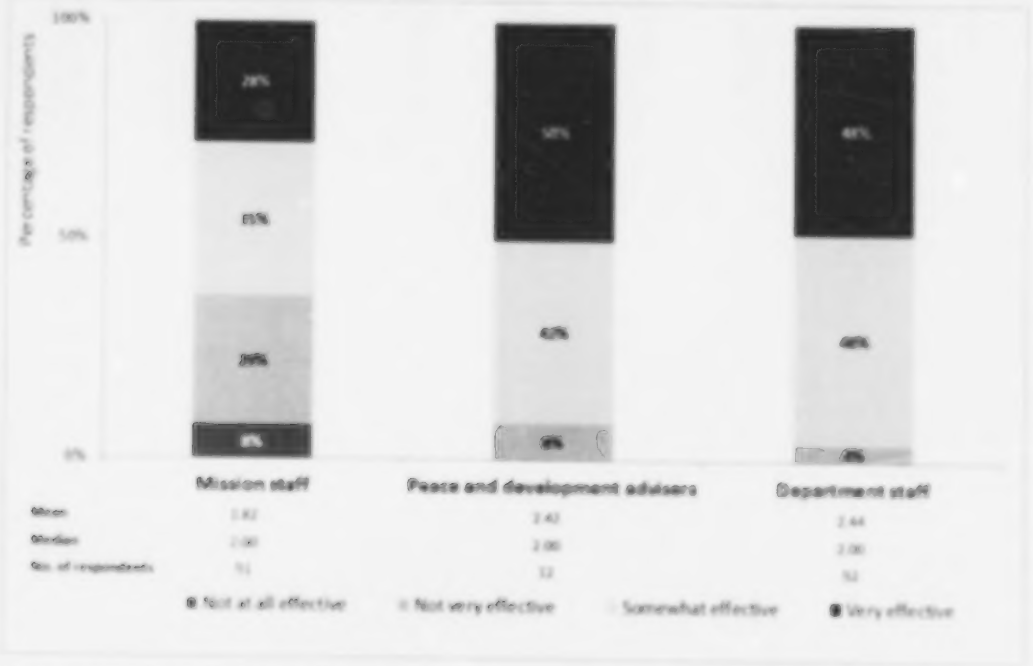
Evidence of the effectiveness of support

19. While the lack of data generated by the Department challenged the evaluation,[18] there is indicative evidence of the effectiveness of the Department's substantive support for field-based conflict prevention and resolution. As figure V indicates, supported field-based entities, especially peace and development advisers,

[14] All P2-D2 staff; 22.9 per cent response rate.
[15] 41.7 per cent response rate.
[16] 53.8 per cent response rate.
[17] 39.7 per cent response rate.
[18] See para. 18 above and paras. 44-50 below.

rate the support of the Department as relatively highly. Field leaders corroborated this positive feedback: in interviews, six of nine Special Representatives of the Secretary-General of case study missions commented positively on the Department's support, as they did in 13 of the 19 compacts reviewed. Moreover, of the 29 evaluations, after-action reviews and lessons-learned reports addressing effectiveness, 20 assessed the Department of Political Affairs positively.

Figure V
Overall perceptions of the effectiveness of Department support, 2008-2015

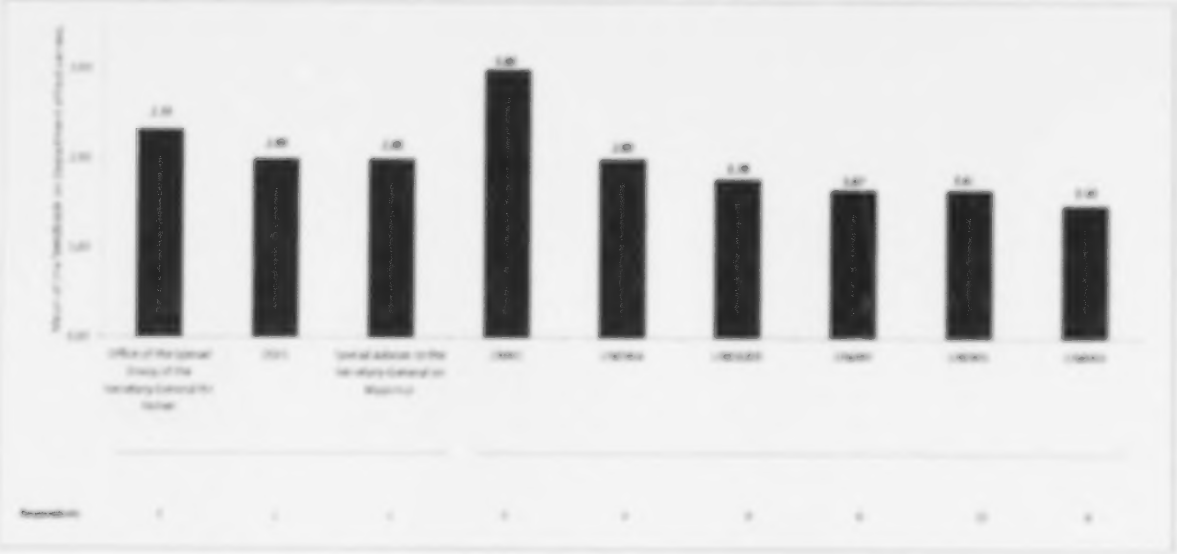


Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division survey.

Note: Definition of "effectiveness" provided by the Division: "the extent to which the Department of Political Affairs has provided high-quality support to the field, e.g., through improved capacity, the integration of specific technical expertise that they did not previously have, sound advice leading to better-informed decisions, and so on"

20. Within this broadly positive context, there were differences in the feedback by field-based entities, across both field settings and support types. As figure VI suggests, smaller missions tend to report higher support effectiveness than larger missions. This difference could be due to the higher backstopping needs of smaller missions, such as peace and development advisers, or, to the relative complexity of the operating environment of larger missions, as underlined in the Special Representative of the Secretary-General end-of-action reports from the two largest missions, UNAMI and UNAMA, larger missions cover more mandate areas, requiring long-term support for governance capacity-building.

Figure VI
Overall perceptions of the effectiveness of Department support, by case study mission



Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division surveys.
Note: Missions presented by cluster, in descending order of means.
Abbreviations: CNMC, Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission; OSES, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel.

21. These differences between smaller and larger missions could also explain variation in feedback on specific types of support provided by the Department.[18] Irrespective of mission size, in interviews and surveys, mission staff highlight expert technical support in electoral assistance and mediation, as well as good-offices support provided by the Department's senior management (e.g., bringing political gravity to negotiations), as particularly effective. However, peace and development advisers and smaller special political missions, more than larger missions, further point to overall political guidance as a particularly effective form of support. In addition, evaluations and after-action reviews of training led by the Department (e.g., on mediation, conflict analysis and strategic planning) conclude that this support was generally timely and increased the knowledge of participants. By contrast, long-term strategic guidance was rated the least effective support.[19] Similarly, staff in four of nine missions were critical of the Department's analytical products, only two were positive.[20]

[18] Correlation $r = -0.62$: the larger the mission, the less positive the perceptions of the effectiveness of support.

[19] Strategic assessment mission reports rarely recommend strategic shifts, despite long-term mission presence and changing conditions on the ground, thereby corroborating this result. Furthermore, five of nine audited missions lacked exit strategies.

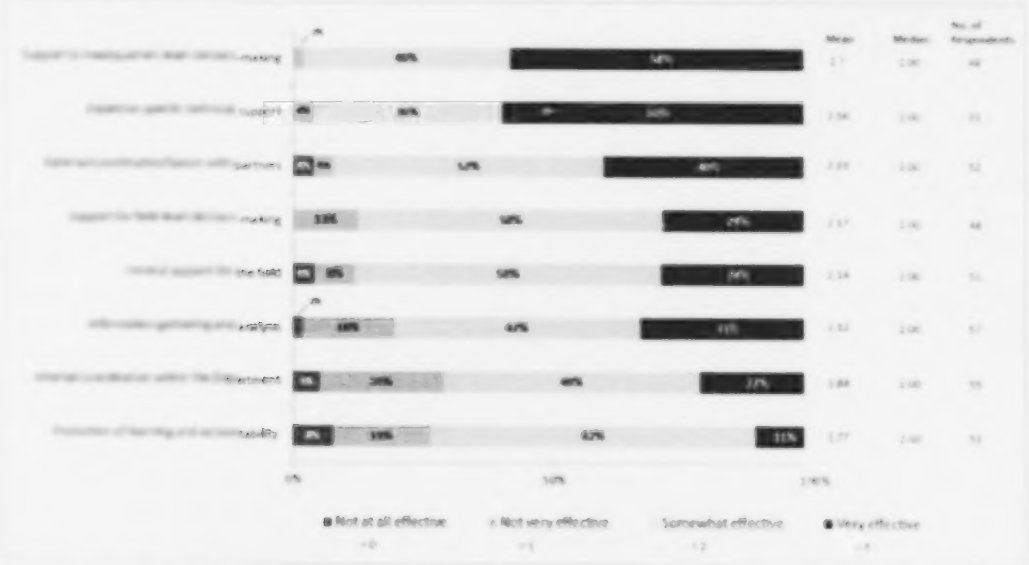
[20] See result D.

22. As figure VII indicates, Department staff self-assessments corroborated views in the field, although staff generally rated their own support more highly. The technical expertise of the Department received particularly high ratings, including by staff in divisions not responsible for this support. Self-assessments also corroborate the areas of relative strength and weakness highlighted in the desk review.[22] Another highly rated area is support for Headquarters-level decision-making, a key aspect of the Department's focus on fostering an enabling environment for the field.

23. Headquarters staff self-assessed promotion of learning and accountability, internal coordination, and information-gathering and analysis by the Department to be relatively less effective. This self-assessment generally corroborated mission case studies (see para. 21 above).

Figure VII

Headquarters staff self-assessment of the effectiveness of the Department, by support type



Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division surveys.

24. The effectiveness of the Department in supporting gender and human rights has been mixed. Surveyed mission staff, peace and development advisers and cluster II experts all perceived Department support to be fairly gender-sensitive.[23] In addition, 88.0 per cent of all peace processes with United Nations engagement in 2014 included regular consultations with women's organizations, compared with

[22] Of the 29 evaluations and other reports assessing effectiveness, 22 rated this support, with 20 rating it positively. Five also rated coordination in setting up or re-hatting a mission, all positively.

[23] Most respondents claimed support to be "somewhat" (45.7 per cent) or "very" (22.0 per cent) gender-sensitive.

50.0 per cent in 2011.[24] However, only four of nine case study missions reported receiving gender-related support from the Department; the remaining five did not provide concrete information on how gender mainstreaming was being promoted. Moreover, none reported receiving human rights-related support, all claiming that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was their principal source of support. In one mission, senior managers raised concerns that mission leadership had neglected gender and human rights altogether, despite the fact that these were core elements of the mission's mandate, in order to focus on its preferred activity of good offices (see paras. 51-56 below). More broadly, Headquarters and mission leadership remain gender-imbalanced.[25]

Evidence of the contribution of the Department to field-level conflict prevention and resolution results

25. On the basis of the limited evidence available, it is plausible that support from the Department has contributed to field-level conflict prevention and resolution. Supported entities from Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria and Yemen (and more anecdotally from Guyana, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)) claim that support from the Department of Political Affairs, such as expert advice on ceasefire negotiations in Yemen, election expertise advice in Afghanistan and political guidance in Maldives, had positively influenced the trajectory of conflict resolution, e.g., by reaching a relatively gender-sensitive agreement in Yemen or designing the recounting procedure for the 2014 Afghan presidential elections.

26. These reported contributions also extend to conflict prevention as well, by contributing, for example, to the peaceful 2015 Nigerian presidential transition and fostering an agreement on the Afghan presidential election results in a peaceful manner. Such examples of conflict prevention successes were few, however, owing in part to a lack of existing analysis in this area (see paras. 18 above and 44-50 below). The report of the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations underscored the low level of investment in conflict prevention more broadly, even as the costs of inaction in this area are becoming ever greater to the international community.[26]

27. While it is difficult to gauge the impact of the effectiveness of support on mission-level success, figure VIII summarizes an analysis of the correlation between the effectiveness of the Department's support and missions' conflict prevention and resolution results. It plots consolidated ratings of the effectiveness of the Department's support against a summary measure of overall mission success, both dimensions being calculated on the basis of a triangulation of available data, taking into account the often non-linear path to conflict prevention and resolution and the many external factors influencing mission success. This analysis does not

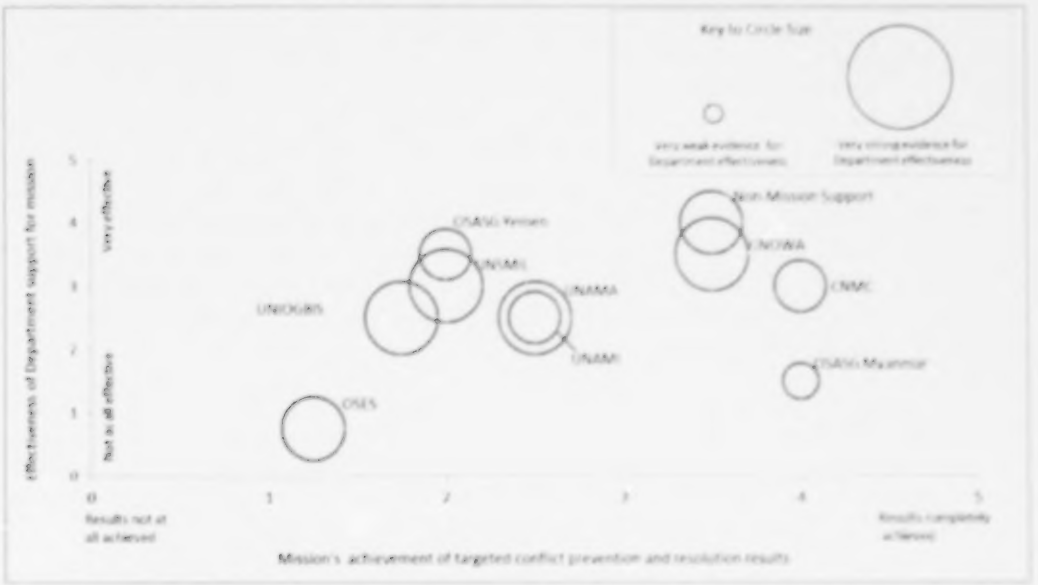
[24] Global study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

[25] The proportion of women in P-5-D-2 positions increased from 18.0 per cent to 29.0 per cent from 2011 to 2014. The Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretaries-General for Political Affairs are all male, however. Mission leadership is even less gender-balanced: of 23 Special Representatives of the Secretary-General/Assistant Secretaries-General leading case-studied missions from 2008 to 2015, only one is female. Additionally, most missions' senior managers are male.

[26] See A/70/95-S/2015/446, paras. 25, 30 and 35.

imply that the mission outcomes indicated would not have happened without the Department's support, but rather that it is plausible that the Department contributed to them. The mixed picture resonated with client feedback[27] and Department staff self-assessments.[28]

Figure VIII
Inspection and Evaluation Division summary assessment of the effectiveness of Department support and overall mission results



Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division assessment based on triangulated analysis of all available evidence.
Abbreviations: CNMC, Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission; OSASG Myanmar, Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar; OSASG Yemen, Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Yemen; OSES, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel.

Factors beyond the control of the Department have constrained mission success and the Department's support for missions

28. A number of factors beyond the control of the Department have constrained mission-level success and, by extension, the Department's effectiveness in supporting

[27] Although not a primary focus in this evaluation, all cluster II experts were surveyed. Overall, 73.1 per cent reported the Department's substantive support to be effective, including its facilitation of meetings and its promotion of inter-panel cooperation. Eighty-three per cent also noted that the Department had not encroached on their independence. Support areas deemed least effective were the induction training, which 52.1 per cent said could have better prepared them to understand administrative rules, and criteria on evidentiary standards, which 37.5 per cent rated less positively. Furthermore, 70.8 per cent claimed support on administrative issues was ineffectively managed, thereby hampering their work.

[28] Twenty-nine per cent perceived that Headquarters' contribution to mission success was significant, 54.0 per cent that it was moderate, 12.0 per cent that it was very small and 5.0 per cent that the Department had not contributed at all.

it. These factors, originally documented in the report of the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations[29] and corroborated in the present evaluation, include Department resources relative to a growing number of missions requiring its support (see para. 11 above and paras. 29-32 below). They also include the pro forma nature of Security Council mandates, with cluster III mission mandates frequently covering up to 10 focus areas, some of which, such as the Rule of Law and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, fall outside the Department's expertise.[30] Further factors include access and movement restrictions, as well as the inherent unpredictability of conflict settings, and the behaviours of parties to conflict and other interested parties. Finally, staff and supported field-based entities alike assert that United Nations administrative rules and procedures, particularly those pertaining to staffing and travel, significantly limit effectiveness in the field.[31] Accordingly, 75.5 per cent of Department staff say external factors strongly influenced the effectiveness of support.

B. Globally, the Department is supporting most of the highest-criticality conflict settings, and its support has generally met the expressed needs of the field; however, it lacks a broad strategy to identify what support it might provide in other settings, and how it might help enable eventual exit

29. In the present evaluation, relevance was defined as the degree to which the Department provided its substantive support to those locations where such support was most critically needed, and whether its support met field-based needs. Defined as such, the Department's relevance was assessed to be generally high, although with some variation and potentially unmet needs.

High coverage of highest-criticality conflict settings, but less consistent coverage elsewhere

30. In order to gauge the Department's relevance as measured by its global reach, the Inspection and Evaluation Division categorized 163 countries and 11 non-country-specific contexts into six tiers, on three proxy measures of conflict criticality: the Global Peace Index, an index measure of media coverage of various conflicts and the number of internally displaced persons within the countries' borders. These tiers were defined as shown below.

[29] See A/70/95-S/2015/446, paras. 23-28.

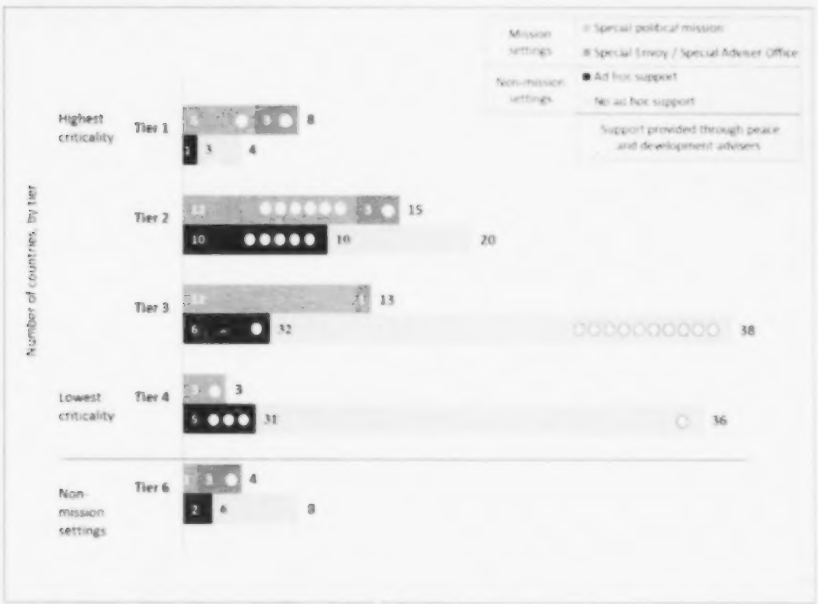
[30] In its review of all four strategic assessment mission and technical assistance mission reports, in no case was a mandate significantly changed — or downsized. Furthermore, during the period under evaluation only three special political missions were closed; all others merely transitioned into another special political mission or a peacekeeping operation. This conclusion corroborates the report of the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (paras. 87-90), as well as OIOS audits, five of nine of which found exit strategies lacking.

[31] Eighty-four per cent of Department staff claim that internal rules and procedures have limited the effectiveness of their support. In addition, in four of eight end-of-action reports, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General cite this area as a major factor jeopardizing field-level results.

		Global Peace Index Rating	*Average Media Rating*	*Average No. of internally displaced persons (millions)*
Highest criticality	Tier 1	Very low	Medium-High	2.14
High criticality	Tier 2	Low	Low-Medium	0.51
Medium criticality	Tier 3	Medium	Low-Medium	0.10
Low criticality	Tier 4	High	Low	0.05
Lowest criticality	Tier 5	Very high	None	-
N/A — Non-country conflicts	Tier 6	N/A	Low-None	N/A

31. The Inspection and Evaluation Division identified the Department's support presence in each of these tiers. As figure IX indicates, the Department supported almost all of the highest-criticality (i.e., tier 1) conflict settings, mostly through direct support for missions, but also through indirect ad hoc support or through peace and development advisers. Beyond this top tier, its presence was less consistent: there were 8 tier 2 countries and 22 tier 3 countries which, although high-criticality, did not receive support from the Department. Conversely, eight countries in lower-criticality tier 4 received support. This mixed picture of relevance was corroborated by Department staff who were surveyed. [32]

Figure IX
The Department's support presence in five conflict-setting tiers, 2008-2015



Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division analysis of data compiled from: Global Peace Index 2015 (www.visionofhumanity.org), news aggregator for armed conflict worldwide (www.conflictmap.org/conflicts), internal displacement data (www.internal-displacement.org).

[32] Mean=3.41 (where 1=disagree strongly and 4=agree strongly) in response to a statement related to the Department's support being provided in those countries globally where it is most needed.

32. Notwithstanding these gaps, the Department is supporting more countries than it was in 2008 (see figure I). Three main initiatives during the period under evaluation enabled it to do so. First, it expanded its regional presence through a regional special political mission in Central Africa and six liaison offices in areas where the Department had no special political mission presence. Second, it has actively strengthened its conflict prevention and resolution partnerships, most prominently through the United Nations Development Programme-Department of Political Affairs Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention[33] as a vehicle for responding to the needs of non-mission settings.[34] The Department deployed 36 peace and development advisers in 2015, representing an increase of 25.0 per cent compared with the two previous years; this number is expected to grow to 40 by 2016.[35] While noting the programme's constraints,[36] both the report of the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations and the advisory group of experts on the 2015 Review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture commend the Joint Programme as an example of effective inter-agency collaboration on conflict prevention and resolution.[37] Third, the Department created new internal support capabilities to support conflict prevention and resolution tasks, including the Mediation Support Unit, Policy and Mediation Division and a dedicated (although small) gender office and focal-point system. Moreover, in 2008 the Department established a standby team of mediators funded with extrabudgetary resources, which is a group of full-time mediation experts in specific technical areas (e.g., constitution-making, gender, natural resources and power-sharing) for rapid as-needed deployment. Finally, it has improved its ability to raise extrabudgetary resources for both staff and field-based projects through a dedicated donor and external liaison function.

Support types viewed largely as relevant, with some variation, and potentially unmet needs

33. As figure X conveys, the overall relevance of support from the Department is generally recognized. Some differences exist among these groups, however, with peace and development advisers rating the Department's support as more relevant than do mission staff and DPA staff themselves.

[33] Department and United Nations Development Programme partnership note, September 2015.

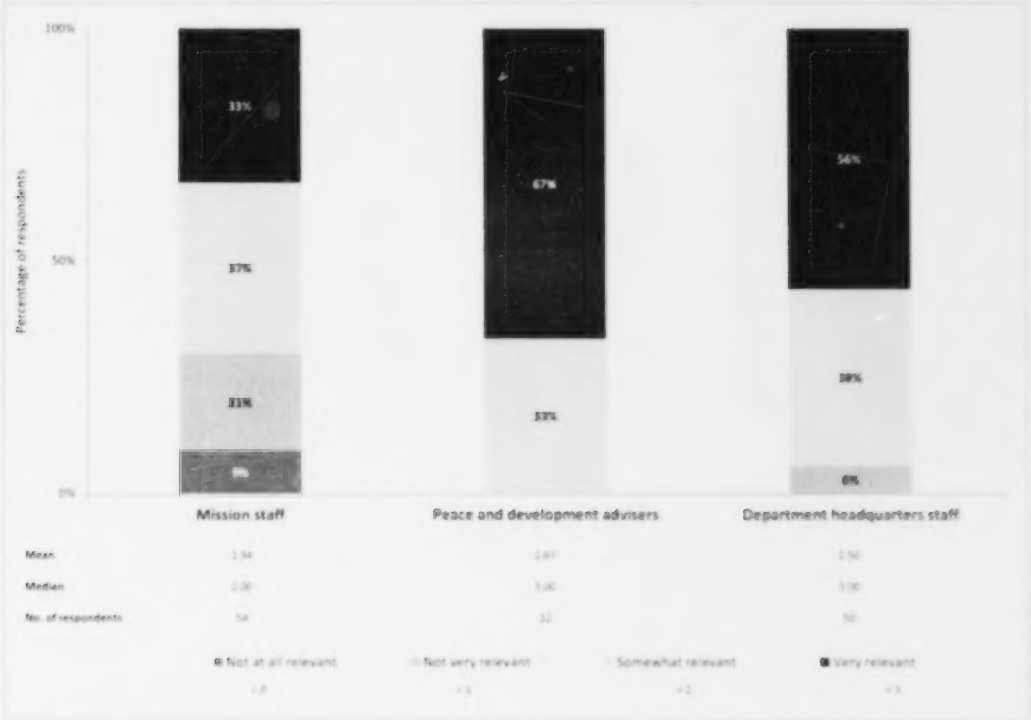
[34] The normative framework for conflict prevention was recently strengthened through Sustainable Development Goal 16. In addition, the Department's 2016-2019 strategic plan outlines efforts to strengthen political and technical support for United Nations country teams, and it has invested in building relationships with Permanent Representatives and regional coordinators to increase their awareness of its support.

[35] Department of Political Affairs multi-year appeal, 2016-2017.

[36] See A/70/95-S/2015/446, paras. 142-148.

[37] See S/2015/730.

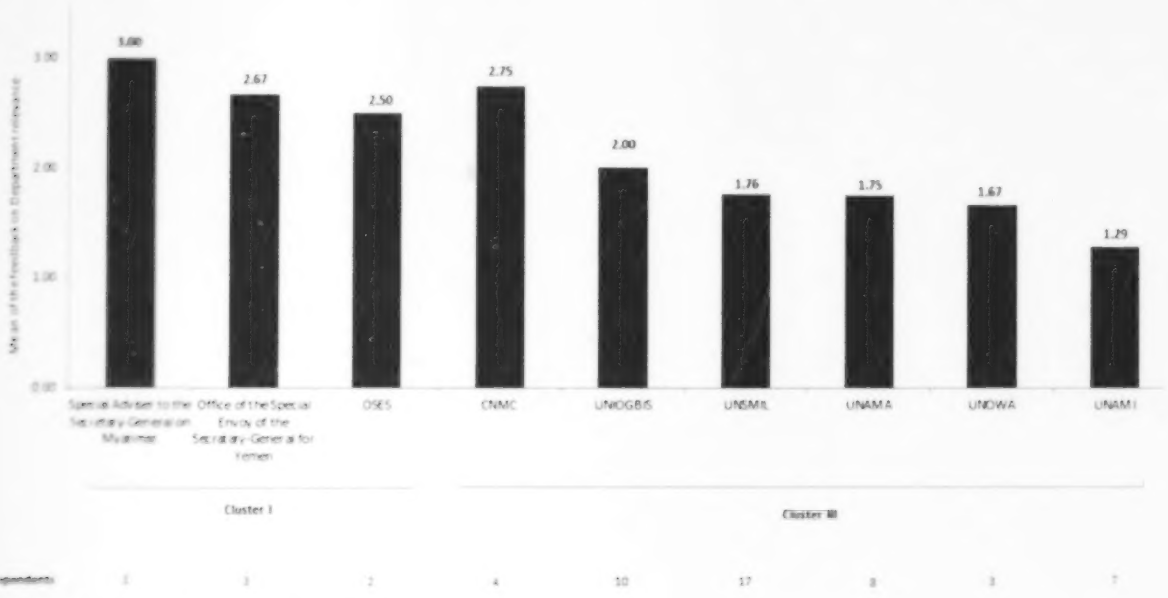
Figure X
Perceptions of the relevance of Department support, 2008-2015



Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division surveys.

34. The more variable ratings of mission staff could be rooted in the diversity within this group. Figure XI summarizes the feedback provided by this group, broken down by individual missions selected for the case study. Overall, smaller cluster III missions, as well as small cluster I missions, rated support from the Department more positively than larger missions.

Figure XI
Field-based entities' perceptions of the relevance of the Department's support, by case study mission



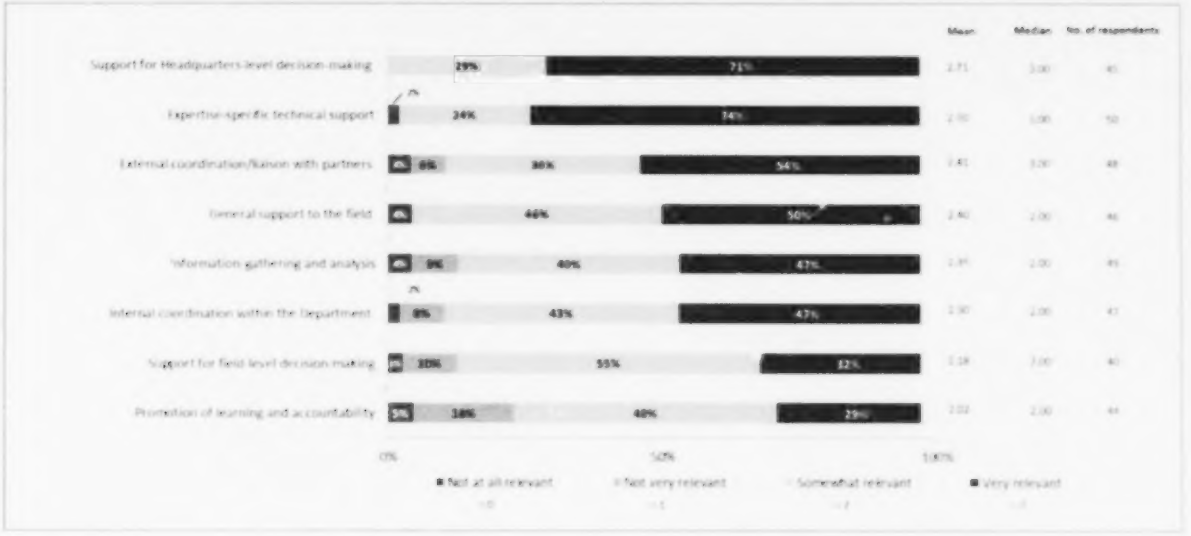
Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division survey.
Note: Missions presented by cluster, in descending order of means.

35. Perceptions of relevance also varied according to the type of support provided. For example, electoral support was extremely relevant to UNSMIL, which received support in three Libyan elections, and to UNAMA, through which the Department helped to achieve a peaceful resolution to the electoral crisis and carry out an unprecedented audit of the 2014 elections, while mediation support and expertise was particularly relevant to UNOWA, including deployment of the standby team of mediators. Peace and development advisers, meanwhile, cited the support of the Department in ensuring the flow of communication among various Headquarters partners, as well as its political guidance and expertise, as being particularly relevant. Department staff corroborated this view, as figure XII illustrates, rating specific technical support, and support for Headquarters-level decision-making, as most relevant.

36. However, there were potentially unmet needs, as awareness of Headquarters support from the Department varied at the field level. While most senior managers were aware of the Department's mediation and good-offices support, special political mission staff and several regional coordinators were not fully aware of the services that the Department provides. Awareness of administrative backstopping support was higher than awareness of substantive support, and a specific type of support cited as missing was analysis in areas where the Department had a comparative advantage, such as on regional aspects or lessons learned from similar cases. These gaps were highlighted in three of six visited special political missions,

and another two highlighted the need for more long-term strategic guidance (see para. 21 above).

Figure XII
Headquarters staff self-assessment of the relevance of the Department, by type of support



Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division survey.

Headquarters planning processes are not well informed by systematic analysis, hampering proactive tailoring of support for needs

37. The desk-review of Department planning documents helps to elucidate this variable feedback on the Department's relevance. At a broad departmental level, the Department has improved its strategic planning capacity since the 2006-2008 Inspection and Evaluation Division evaluation, developing its first strategic plan in 2013. Its strategic plan for the period 2016-2019 will reportedly be complemented by a results-based framework and division-level workplans. It has also improved its strategic planning and guidance within the Policy and Mediation Division. As recommended in the report of the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, a small centralized analysis and planning function has been recently established within the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to bring together analytical work from Headquarters and the field, in order to inform its decisions regarding strategic assessment and planning for peace operations.

38. Despite this broad organizational progress, weaknesses remain in Headquarters and field-based planning processes. At the Headquarters level, while more recent division-level workplans reflect overarching Department priorities, with some articulating strategies for achieving those goals, the plans do not consistently or proactively identify which other missions they will support and with what types of support or how they will work together with other divisions to achieve shared

conflict prevention and resolution support objectives.[38] At the field level, numerous OIOS audits note planning gaps, such as a lack of linkage between workplans, mandate implementation plans and logical frameworks; insufficient linkage to United Nations country team plans; and a lack of exit strategies.[39] These gaps might be rooted in staff capacity constraints (see paras. 40 and 41 below), the lack of investment in knowledge products that might aid strategic planning (see paras. 44-50 below), or the recent nature of the gains noted in paragraph 37 above. Entities supported by the Department, as well as the Department's staff, corroborate these gaps.[40]

C. The Department has adapted its resources to respond to the needs of an expanding field presence, but its own internal structures and procedures, coupled with cumbersome United Nations administrative processes, have limited its ability to do so in the most efficient manner

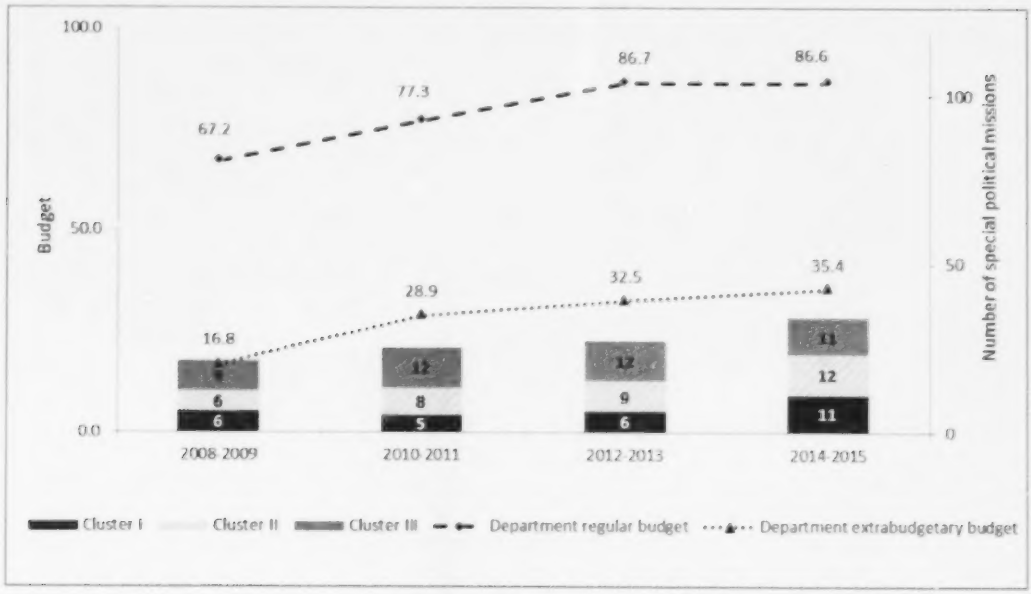
39. As figure XIII illustrates, the resources of the Department have increased, but not at a level commensurate with that of the entities requiring its assistance. Whereas the number of special political missions has grown by 62.0 per cent (and the smaller and potentially more support-dependent cluster I missions by 83.0 per cent), resources have grown by 50.0 per cent. In addition, the Department has increasingly relied on extrabudgetary resources, growing from 20.0 per cent of its total budget to almost 30.0 per cent.

[38] In the Inspection and Evaluation Division review of 27 division workplans, quality and comprehensiveness varied considerably.

[39] Review of OIOS audits, 2008-2015.

[40] Peace and development adviser survey respondents and Department's Headquarters staff see areas of improvement regarding the Department's planning capacity and in its capacity for early action. This was further echoed by mission staff, who, in addition to strategic planning, mentioned the need for analytical capacity to inform strategy.

Figure XIII
Evolution of Department resources and special political missions, by cluster
(Millions of United States dollars)

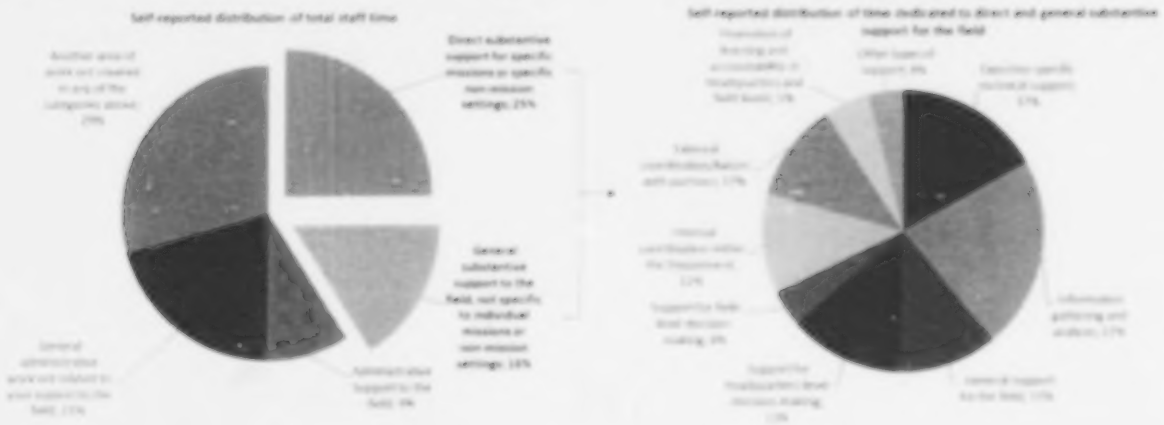


Source: A/69/416, A/68/9 (Sect. 3), A/66/6 (Sect. 3), A/64/6 (Sect. 3), A/69/349, A/66/354 and A/68/327.

40. The Department has adapted to this reality by taking steps to meet the needs of a growing field presence (see para. 32 below), with a relatively modest investment in the desk support function; for example, the overall number of the Department's desk support staff ranges from one to five per mission.

41. However, within this context, the Department has struggled to be effective and efficient. While field-based feedback on the effectiveness and relevance of the Department's support varies (see paras. 20-23 below and 33-36 above), desk officers themselves report being spread thinly, often at the expense of other important areas of support. As figure XIV illustrates, staff report spending only 41.0 per cent of their time providing substantive support to the field and 59.0 per cent on administrative work and other areas. In addition, as the pie chart on the right of the figure indicates, of this 41.0 per cent devoted to substantive support, half is spent on internal and external coordination and support for Headquarters decision-making, only 22.0 per cent on information-gathering and analysis and 17 per cent on expertise-specific technical support. These results corroborate the feedback of interviewed staff, desk officers and managers, who reported spending too much time producing talking points and briefing notes for senior management and attending to administrative matters, leaving little time for political analysis.

Figure XIV
Department staff self-reported time allocations

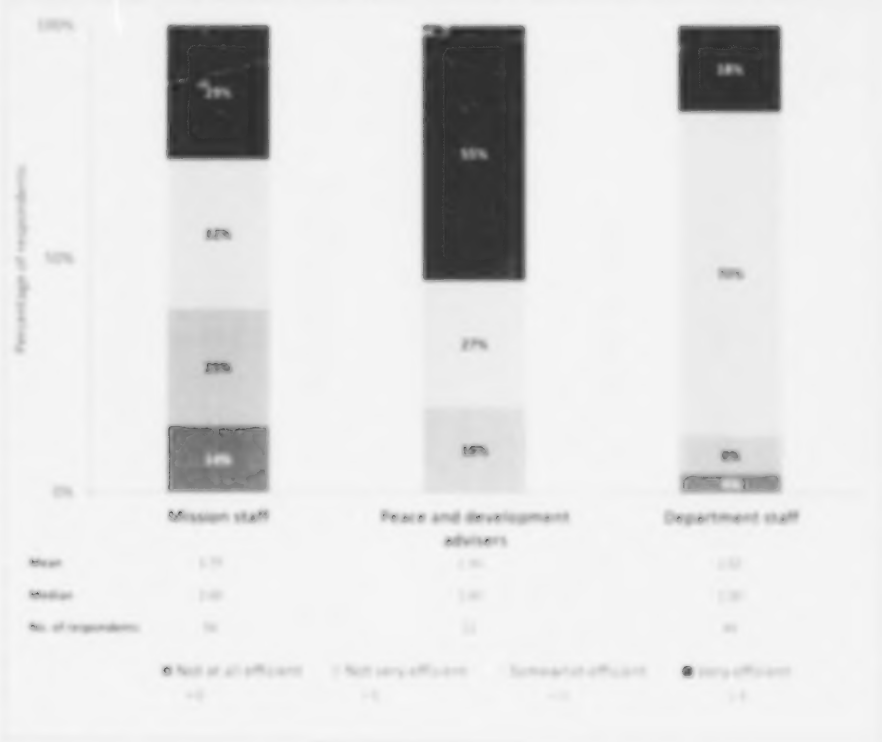

Self-reported distribution of total staff time
Direct substantive support for specific missions or specific non-mission settings, 25%
General substantive support to the field, not specific to individual missions or non-mission settings, 18%
Administrative support to the field, 9%
Self-reported distribution of time dedicated to direct and general substantive support for the field
Other types of support, 9%
Information gathering and analysis, 17%
General support to the field, 13%

Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division survey.

42. Accordingly, as figure XV conveys, Headquarters and mission staff generally rated the Department as somewhat efficient. The smaller and more backstopping-dependent peace and development advisers, meanwhile, viewed the Department's efficiency more positively.[41]

[41] However, 68.0 per cent of staff reported that the Department has become more efficient over time.

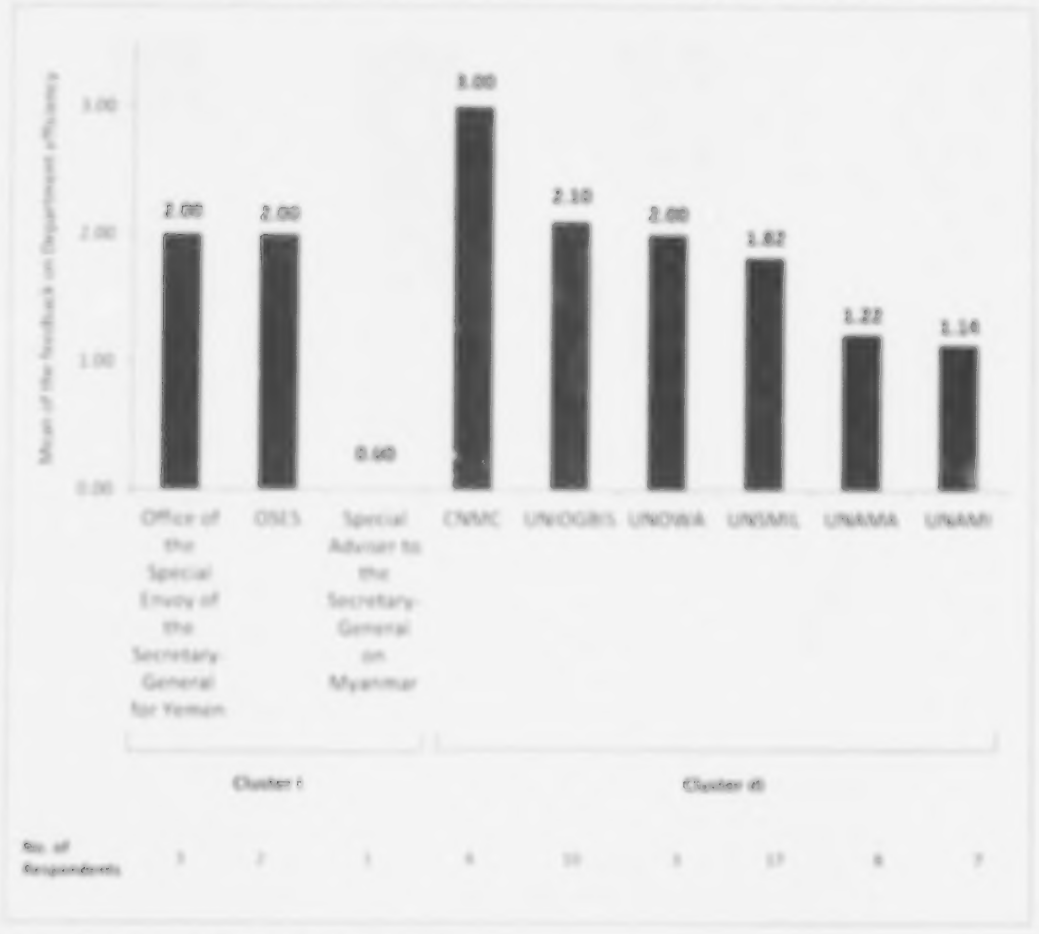
Figure XV
Perceptions of the efficiency of Department support, 2008-2015



Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division surveys.

43. Figure XVI breaks down feedback from individual missions, indicating that smaller missions, such as peace and development advisers, generally found support from the Department to be more efficient than did larger and more broadly mandated missions. Mission staff feedback during case study missions helped to explain the discrepancies in specific areas. In every mission visited, large numbers of staff reported that the United Nations administrative rules and procedures, which the Department helps them to navigate, represented one of the most significant challenges, limiting their ability to deliver on their conflict prevention and resolution mandate in an efficient manner. In their end-of-assignment reports, the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General corroborated this view.[37]

Figure XVI
Field-based entities' perceptions of the efficiency Department support, by case study mission



Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division survey.
Note: Missions presented by cluster, in descending order of means.
Abbreviations: CNMC, Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission; OSES, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel.

D. While generating a significant volume of knowledge products, the Department has not adequately harnessed such knowledge to strengthen learning or accountability, either at Headquarters or at the field level

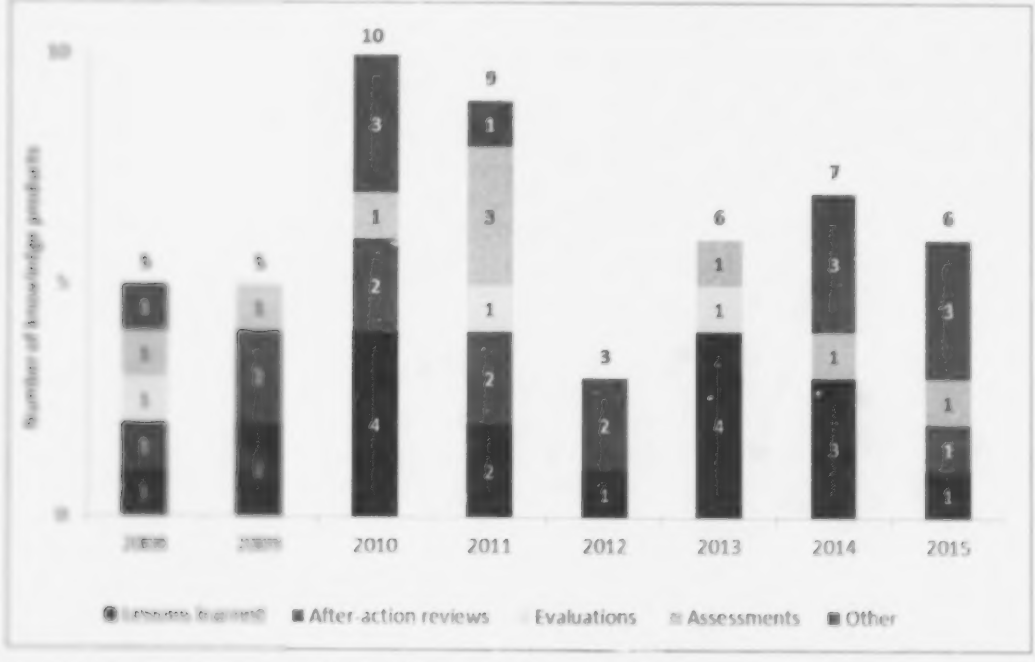
44. The Department has made strides in its use of knowledge as a source of institutional learning and improvement. For example, it established the Guidance and Learning Unit in 2010, an evaluation policy in 2012 and a learning and

evaluation framework in 2013 (revised in 2014). Accordingly, in the 2012-2013 Inspection and Evaluation Division evaluation scorecard, the Department was credited with these improvements since the 2010-2011 evaluation scorecard.

45. In the same 2012-2013 evaluation scorecard report and in the present evaluation, however, outstanding gaps remained in the Department's systems for harnessing knowledge for learning and accountability. First, the Department is not structured to produce independent evaluations of performance either at the Headquarters or at the field level. Presently, the generation of knowledge products is split between the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, which is tasked with producing evaluations (but has limited capacity to do so), and the Guidance and Learning Unit, which produces a range of non-evaluation products (e.g., after-action reviews and lessons-learned reports). There is as yet no dedicated evaluation office in the Department, which sets it apart from most other Secretariat entities.

46. As figure XVII conveys, during the period under evaluation the Department produced a total of 51 knowledge products. Most of these were learning-oriented after-action reviews and lessons-learned exercises. For the entire eight-year period, only three such products were evaluations.[42]

Figure XVII
Number of Department knowledge products, 2008-2015



Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division document review.

[42] Evaluation of the multi-year appeal for 2011-2013 (2013), evaluation of the start-up of UNSMIL (2013) and mid-term evaluation of the Rapid Response Funding Mechanism (2012).

47. The Inspection and Evaluation Division assessed these 51 exercises as being of mixed quality, although they generated a number of concrete recommendations to improve the Department. However, the number of evaluations is low, especially given the Department's sizeable financial, programmatic and reputational risk; moreover, no evaluation covered broader outcome-level results in special political missions (see paras. 14-16 above). Furthermore, although since 2013 the Department has systematically selected cases for lessons-learned exercises, this approach does not lend itself to identifying the optimal cases from which to learn the most valuable lessons.[43] The generation of learning products bore little relation to the diversity of missions led by the Department; cluster I missions are heavily underrepresented;[44] and among the cluster III missions covered, the generation of learning products bore little relation to mission size.[45] No reports addressed human rights, and only the nine audit reports addressed gender.

48. The roots of this relatively low level of attention to independent, outcome-focused and risk-based evaluation are partly structural and partly resource-related. The Department's three evaluations were in fact managed by the Guidance and Learning Unit, which cited too many competing priorities and too few resources to devote itself sufficiently to evaluation. It also lacked the resources for managing evaluations, as well as the clout of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, which left it vulnerable to internal barriers to independent evaluation.

49. In the evaluation policy and learning and evaluation framework, the Department states the intention to link its learning plan to its strategic framework and the Under-Secretary-General's compact to that of the Secretary-General. The strategic plan for the period 2016-2019 includes a results-based framework with clear indicators of success upon which an evaluation plan can be built (e.g., a 2015 baseline and 2016 and 2017 targets). However, 63.0 per cent of Department staff surveyed claimed the Department's overall investment in monitoring and evaluation is insufficient, and 43.0 per cent that the Department does not systematically reflect on its own performance. Mission staff interviewed had generally not received learning products, nor were they aware of the Policy and Practice Database repository, with the exception of mission staff who had previously worked in the Department. These staff acknowledged a greater need for lessons learned.[46]

50. The Inspection and Evaluation Division had first indicated these knowledge gaps in its 2006-2008 evaluation of the Department.[47] As the Department intends to

[43] Potential topics are canvassed through a participatory process, which can skew selection towards positive examples rather than the most lesson-rich examples. The Guidance and Learning Unit then systematically selects specific cases on the basis of three criteria, which can further skew the process towards positive examples. This positive skew might help explain the positive assessment of the Department in the after-action reviews and lessons-learned reports reviewed (see para. 19 above).

[44] Nineteen reports covered cluster III missions, eight non-mission settings and one cluster I mission.

[45] One product each for the largest missions, UNAMI, UNAMA and UNSOM; the rest cover smaller missions.

[46] For example, 50.0 per cent of peace and development adviser survey respondents did not feel that the Department sufficiently shares lessons to improve field-based work.

[47] See E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.4, para. 53.

revise its evaluation policy, this revision represents an opportunity to revisit these gaps.

E. Headquarters oversight of mission accountability remains weak

51. In addition to knowledge gaps with respect to overall organizational performance, measures for enforcing the individual accountability of field leaders for results have likewise been insufficient. The Inspection and Evaluation Division first highlighted this issue in its 2006-2008 evaluation.[48] Since then, a range of OIOS audits have raised similar concerns.[49] A decade later, with limited progress documented, it remains a gap.[50]

52. This gap is rooted in structural factors that are largely beyond the control of the Department, but nonetheless within its remit to acknowledge and manage, wherever possible, or elevate to the appropriate level.[51] All but two Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Special Envoys are leaders at the Under-Secretary-General level, and all are senior statespersons with long diplomatic careers. They report directly to the Secretary-General rather than to the head of the Department, who is likewise an Under-Secretary-General. Since 2009, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General have been required to develop compacts with the Secretary-General. This action, spearheaded by the Department, represents the single most tangible sign of progress documented to strengthen field-level accountability since the 2006-2008 Inspection and Evaluation Division evaluation.[52] This commitment has not been fully fulfilled, however; as figure XVIII conveys, the proportion of Under-Secretaries-General in the missions selected for case study who completed compacts consistently hovered in the area of 50.0 per cent during the period under evaluation.

[48] Ibid., paras. 46-49, 58 and 59 (e).

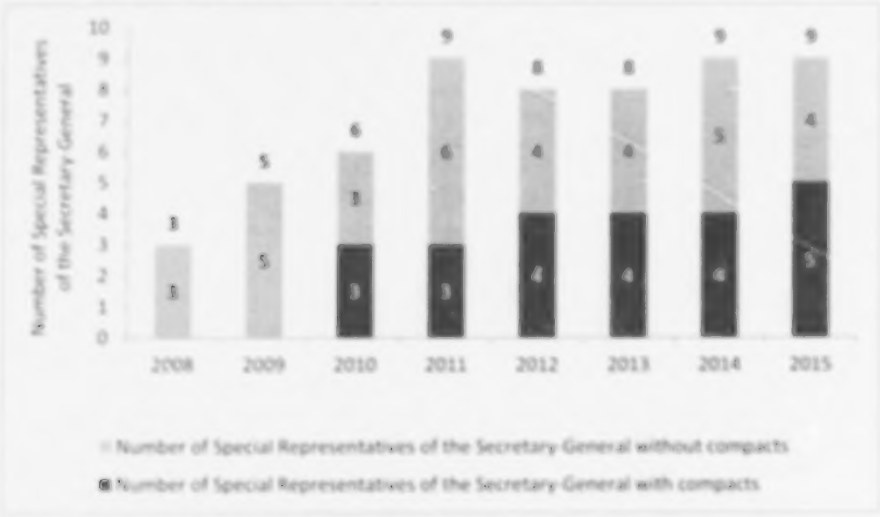
[49] See A/64/294; OIOS audit of the Department's substantive and administrative support to special envoys, 2 September 2011, assignment No. 2011/560/01 and OIOS audit of United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, 23 January 2012, assignment No. 2011/560/02.

[50] The 2007 Inspection and Evaluation Division evaluation focused specifically on Special Envoys' offices. In the present evaluation, the Inspection and Evaluation Division pinpoints these offices as embodying higher accountability challenges, owing to the lack of compacts.

[51] In follow-up to the Inspection and Evaluation Division 2007 evaluation, the Department correctly noted that most action on the recommendation rested with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

[52] Establishment of these compacts resulted from the Inspection and Evaluation Division 2007 evaluation; the subsequent follow-up triennial review (see E/AC.51/2011/3) cites the compacts as the most tangible sign of progress in strengthening mission accountability.

Figure XVIII
Proportion of case study missions leaders completing compacts, 2008-2015



Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division document review.

53. Most strikingly, none of the Special Envoys included in the analysis had completed a compact at any time, as they are not required to do so, unlike the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General.

54. Although the Executive Office of the Secretary-General is responsible primarily for overseeing field-level accountability, the Department plays a role in this area by providing feedback on the compacts of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. In a positive sign of Executive Office attention to field accountability, it completed end-of-cycle performance assessments in response to all compacts produced by the 21 Under-Secretaries-General during this period. Beyond the compliance level, however, these performance documents lack a strong focus on individual accountability: among the Special Representatives' 569 targeted results from 2008-2015, the vast majority (69.6 per cent) focused on output production (e.g., training sessions held) rather than outcomes achieved, this despite purported efforts by the Department to instil a stronger results orientation into the compacts. In addition, 63.1 per cent of these 569 results were rated as having been "satisfactorily" achieved by the Special Representatives, 25.4 per cent as "partially satisfactorily" and only 11.5 per cent as "not achieved", and among those in the last category in no case did the performance assessment attribute non-achievement to the Special Representative; only external factors were cited as reasons for non-achievement. Furthermore, the Department staff who provide inputs to the compacts of the Special Representatives are beneath the staff level of the Special Representatives; the more authoritative Under-Secretary-General does not serve as a conduit for the Department's collective feedback on mission performance.

55. Against this backdrop, the relationship between the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and missions leadership uniformly appears to

Except the document is available supplied.

be one of collegial support from the former to the latter, rather than one of heavy-handed oversight. In all case study missions, the current cohort of mission leaders described their relationship with the Office of the Under-Secretary (and the Under-Secretary-General himself) as one of mutual trust and as-needed contact. In these cases, mission leaders as well as their senior managers reported that the lack of the Department oversight served as a useful form of support in its own right: without the "heavy hand" of Headquarters, leaders could attend to the challenging political tasks at hand. However, this sentiment was invariably qualified by the rejoinder that the positive nature of this relationship rests on the personal competence and style of the Under-Secretary-General and the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General.

56. From the case study missions, there were numerous positive examples of field-level effectiveness, as well as a handful of cases that underlined the gap in institutionalized oversight. In three of the seven case study missions led by Under-Secretaries-General, for example, concerns were raised by mission staff, as well as external stakeholders, about current or previous neglect by Special Representatives of broad areas of their mandate, in order to focus on their good-offices role. In one case, this conduct reportedly occurred without a plan to entrust these other aspects of the mandate to the mission's Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General. In two cases, staff raised concerns about a previous leader's ethical conduct, but no performance assessment was located for the Special Representatives in question. The fact that the Department's staff self-report on the effectiveness of its promotion of learning and accountability, and their limited ability to dedicate time to this function, underline this gap (see para. 22 above and figure VII).

V. Conclusion

57. Since the 2006-2008 Inspection and Evaluation Division evaluation, the Department has adapted to the significant growth of field-based conflict prevention and resolution by reorienting its activities, structures and partnerships to support this work. It is currently supporting almost all of the highest-criticality conflict settings, and there are noteworthy examples of how its support has contributed to success in the field, despite significant external constraints affecting this success. The entities it supports, particularly smaller and more backstopping-dependent missions, positively acknowledge the Department's achievements in adapting to its more field-focused role in these ways.

58. Despite these gains, the Department is still adapting to meet the support needs placed on it. Its analytical capacity, for example, which once constituted a core focus, now represents a key support gap. Although resource and structural constraints have limited the Department's ability to fully meet expectations, its constraints are also internal. The Department still lacks a dedicated evaluation function with the independence and resources to generate objective and credible knowledge on performance, nearly a decade after the Inspection and Evaluation Division pointed out this gap. Its planning processes do not systematically incorporate analysis as an input into their strategies. Most prominently, the Department remains poorly positioned to oversee field-level accountability.

VI. Recommendations

59. The Inspection and Evaluation Division makes four important recommendations to the Department, all of which it has accepted.

Recommendation 1 (result E)

The Department, in consultation with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, should seek to institutionalize its role in contributing to field-level accountability, by:

- Developing an accountability framework to clearly delineate roles and responsibilities of the Department (including that of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs) in relation to those of the Executive Office and mission leadership, in contributing to field-level accountability
- Advocating the requirement that compacts be completed by Special Envoys and Special Advisers
- Making mission leadership compacts publicly available.

Indicators: Framework developed, implemented and monitored, leading to enhanced Department role in strengthening mission accountability; compact requirement made universal; compacts made publicly available

Recommendation 2 (results A, D and E)

The Department of Political Affairs should fill two key analytical gaps, both linked to its learning and accountability needs as rooted in the 2016-2019 strategic plan and the Department's priorities, namely:

- Its political analysis, as a tool for early warning leading to early action and as an input into Headquarters and field-level planning processes
- Its evaluation function and other sources of evaluative knowledge (e.g., lesson-learning, after-action reviews), by ensuring that the planned revision of the Department's evaluation policy adequately addresses independence and resource and risk-based planning gaps.

Indicators: The actions above are undertaken, and their implementation monitored, resulting in analytical products that are tailored to the knowledge needs of the Department, are of high quality and credible to key stakeholders and are used to inform decision-making

Recommendation 3 (results A and C)

The Department should strengthen Headquarters and field-level planning processes by ensuring that:

- All Headquarters divisions incorporate knowledge generated from data-driven analysis (see recommendation 2) and articulate a well-evidenced rationale for where they will invest their finite resources and through which specific types of support, both individually and in collaboration with other divisions
- All mission plans and associated documents (budgets and organization charts) are quality-assured for consistently high clarity on how the expectations of the

Security Council and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General will be achieved (e.g., structural alignment with mandate, outcome-focused indicators of achievement and exit strategy), in line with recommendation 1.

Indicators: The Department of Political Affairs undertakes quality assurance of all mission plans, and necessary changes are made to achieve full alignment with Security Council and Executive Office expectations.

Recommendation 4 (results B and C)

The Department, in consultation with the Security Council, other intergovernmental bodies and member State groupings, individual donors, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Controller and partners, should undertake measures to adequately resource core functional gaps, whether through internal resource reallocations, strengthened resource mobilization to generate additional and more predictable resources, or some combination of both, in the following areas:

- Conflict prevention, including analysis to help better enable early warning and action
- Evaluation
- Knowledge management
- Strategic planning
- Resource mobilization itself.

Indicators: Consultations undertaken with stakeholders indicated, leading to adequate and more predictable resourcing of the areas indicated.

Annex

Formal comments provided by the Department

The Inspection and Evaluation Division presents below the full text of comments received from the Department of Political Affairs on the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the Department. This practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.

Comments of the Department on the results of the evaluation of the Office of the Department of Political Affairs

1. I refer to your memo dated 9 May 2016 and wish to express my appreciation to Robert McCouch and his team for useful exchanges and the opportunity we have had to provide informal comments and feedback on the draft report on the evaluation of the Department of Political Affairs.

2. I am grateful to note that most of our comments and the factual clarifications we provided were incorporated. At this stage, we do not have any additional comments.

3. We believe that the report, taking into account its angle and scope, reflects the measures that the Department has taken since the previous evaluation to improve its effectiveness and efficiency in the areas of conflict prevention and mediation. We take note of the recommendations proposed in the report to further strengthen our capacities and working methods.

4. I am pleased to attach our proposed action plan for the implementation of the recommendations. We take note that some of the recommendations require the support of other actors, including the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Member States and the General Assembly, and we will endeavour to work with all these entities to ensure their implementation.

5. Allow me once again to thank your team that has worked on this evaluation for the availability, engagement and constructive spirit shown throughout this exercise.